

# ИЗТОКОЗНАНИЕТО – ТРАДИЦИИ И СЪВРЕМЕННОСТ

Сборник с доклади  
от Международна научна конференция  
в памет на проф. дфн Александър Федотов

съставител *Иво Панов*

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## СЪДЪРЖАНИЕ

### ПОЗДРАВЛЕНИЯ

- Илияна Йотова, вицепрезидент на Република България / 9
- Мадлен Данова, декан на Факултета по класически и нови филологии,  
Софийски университет „Св. Климент Охридски“ / 10
- Снежана Димитрова-Федотова, председател на Съюза на българските  
журналисти / 12
- Алия Масалимова, зам.-ректор на Казахстанския държавен университет / 14
- Александър Сторожук, Санктпетербургски държавен университет / 17
- Темиртай Избастин, посланик на Република Казахстан  
в Република България / 18
- Таня Михайлова, директор на Дипломатическия институт към МВНР / 19
- Санджай Рана, посланик на Република Индия в Република България / 25

### ДОКЛАДИ

- За достойнствата на китайския метафизичен проект според някои текстове  
на Лайбниц, *Александър Иванов* / 29
- Началото на българо-иранските междудържавни отношения: съвместен  
изследователски проект, *Ангел Орбецов* / 49
- Ролята на майката в образованието на децата в Южна Корея,  
*Анета Димитрова* / 65
- Востоковед В. В. Бартольд и первая туркменская этнографическая экспедиция,  
*Бике Диванкулиева* / 73
- Академично сътрудничество с Централна Азия – начало и перспективи,  
*Виолета Добичина* / 79
- Разбиранията в иранското есе „Окцидентоза“ за иранската травма и за  
пътищата към преодоляването ѝ, *Владимир Митев* / 87
- Състраданието като средство за разгръщане на съзнанието в махаяна,  
*Гергана Русева* / 97
- Семантичните особености соматических фразеологизмов туркменского,  
русского и персидского языков, *Гульшат Гундогдыева* / 111
- Мястото на сино-вьетнамската лексика в съвременния вьетнамски език,  
*Даяна Иванова* / 117
- Източната философия и култура в Софийския университет  
„Св. Климент Охридски“, *Десислава Дамянова* / 125
- Changes in the field of Education in Republic of Korea in the post Covid-19 Era,  
*James Kang* / 133

- Йогякарта* или последният султанат на Индонезия, *Добрин Бугов* / 143
- Туркменистан в период бронзового века: на основе археологических материалов, *Дурдымурад Аннаев* / 153
- Саади Ширази (1210–1292) – персийският пътешественик и мъдрец моралист, *Иво Панов* / 159
- Letters, truth and fiction-writing in *The things they carried*, *Ivan Dimitrov* / 167
- Отпечатъци в бъдещето (из професионалните и лични спомени за проф. Александър Федотов), *Ирина Сотирова* / 175
- Атрибуция и датиране на панелна композиция от Керала, Южна Индия, в Националната галерия, *Йоана Тавитян, Златка Димитрова* / 181
- Огледало на сърцето: тибетската култура в научната дейност на проф. дфн Александър Федотов, *Людмила Класанова* / 193
- Психологически анализ сиблингових отношений в полнородных и неполнородных семьях (на примере Казахстана), *Майра Кабакова* / 205
- Комуникацията в Югоизточна Азия – модел на бъдещето, *Минка Златева* / 215
- Some of medicinal herbs' names in turkic folk medicine (based on the treatise *Dastûr al-'ilāj*), *Nazym Kairanbayeva, Zubaida Shadkam* / 225
- Традиции в международните отношения, установени от проф. дфн Александър Федотов, *Николина Кирилова* / 233
- Думи в турския език, изразяващи концепта „цивилизация“, *Нихал Йозерган* / 243
- Теоретические основы этнопедагогической парадигмы образования и пути её реализации в образовательном процессе, *Нурбубу Асипова* / 265
- От обсебване към възплътяване: някои аспекти от шаманския инициационен период, *Пролетина Робова* / 271
- По следите на народните вярвания и практики в КНДР, *Райна Бенева* / 281
- Уйгуро-монголската писменост и квадратното писмо като символи на монголската културна идентичност, *Светла Къртева-Данчева* / 301
- Тигърът в корейската митология и фолклор като проява на свещеното, *Светослава Пейчева* / 313
- Востоковедение в Туркменистане: начало, современность и перспективы, *Сердар Атаев* / 319
- Emotions in the political body of the East – metaphors and cultural conceptualisations, *Sirma Kostadinova* / 325
- Влияние восточного пантеизма на классическую туркменскую литературу, *Сона Аннаева* / 335
- Issues of Japanese Anthropology in the Studies of Emiko Ohnuki-Tierney, *Zemfira Yerzhan* / 339

## **ИНФОРМАЦИЯ ЗА АВТОРИТЕ** / 347

## SOME OF MEDICINAL HERBS' NAMES IN TURKIC FOLK MEDICINE (BASED ON THE TREATISE DASTÛR AL-'ILĀJ)

NAZYM KAIRANBAYEVA, ZUBAIDA SHADKAM

**Abstract.** Traditional medicine is understood as a set of therapeutic and hygienic measures practiced in local human populations. This knowledge is based on the experience of one or a number of generations of people and was transmitted orally. Each more or less stable human population has its own set of therapeutic and prophylactic means and techniques. Almost every human civilization had its own established traditional medicine, which is to some extent reflected in written sources (the so-called medical treatises). These medical treatises are sometimes difficult to understand due to significant differences in concepts and terms in traditional and modern scientific medicine. The analysis of treatises is a serious scientific problem that requires the joint efforts of physicians, botanists, ethnographers, linguists and specialists in the field of pharmacy.

The article is presented a some of herbs in Turkic folk medicine and the main features of plants that are still used for the treatment of different diseases. As an object of scientific research there was chosen full-fledged medical treatise "Dastûr al-'ilāj", which was written among the nomadic Turks at the beginning of the 16<sup>th</sup> century. Compared to the methods of traditional medicine used today, it was found that recipes used centuries ago are used in practice and world medicine today.

**Keywords:** medieval treatise, Dastûr al-'ilāj, medical herbs, adyryspan.

**Резюме.** Традиционната медицина се разбира като съвкупност от терапевтични и хигиенни мерки, практикувани от местното население. Тези знания се основават на опита на едно или няколко поколения хора и се предават устно. Всяка повече или по-малко стабилна човешка популация има свой собствен набор от терапевтични и профилактични средства и техники. Почти всяка човешка цивилизация е имала своя утвърдена традиционна медицина, която до известна степен е отразена в писмени източници (т.нар. медицински трактати). Те понякога са трудни за разбиране поради значителните различия в понятията и термините в традиционната и в съвременната научна медицина. Анализът на трактатите е сериозен научен проблем, който изисква съвместните усилия на лекари, ботаници, етнографи, лингвисти и специалисти в областта на фармацията.

В статията са представени някои от билките в турската народна медицина и основните характеристики на растенията, които все още се използват за лечение на различни заболявания. За обект на научното изследване е избран медицинският трактат Dastûr al-'ilāj, написан сред тюрките номади в началото на XVI в. В сравнение с методите на традиционната медицина, използвани днес, беше установено, че рецептите, използвани преди векове, съществуват и до днес в практиката и в световната медицина.

**Ключови думи:** средновековен трактат, Dastûr al-'ilāj, лечебни билки.

## Introduction

Traditional medicine (also known as folk medicine) comprises medical aspects of traditional knowledge that developed over generations within the folk beliefs of various societies, before the era of modern medicine. The World Health Organization (WHO) defines traditional medicine by following words: “Traditional medicine includes diverse health practices, approaches, knowledge and beliefs incorporating plant, animal and/or mineral-based medicines, spiritual therapies, manual techniques and exercises, applied singularly or in combination to maintain well-being, as well as to treat, diagnose or prevent illness” (www.who.int). Traditional medicine is often contrasted with scientific medicine.

Among Turkic tribes in history medicine has been a semi-secret, handed over field of activity with a unique tradition. This field, where scientific medicine and folk medicine were carried out together in every period of Turkic history, is rich and ancient. A. Bayat, the author of the book “History of Medicine”, examines Turkic medicine in 3 periods based on the entry of Turks to Islam: Pre-Islamic Period, Islamic Period, Westward Orientation Period (Bayat, 2016). It is clear that the period of intensive development of Turkic healing culture and abundantly preserved written relics is the second period – after the adoption of Islam.

### Turkic medical treatises and “Dastûr al-'ilāj”

Medical texts have an important place in Turkic language and science history. While these works appeal to many disciplines such as medicine, sociology, psychology, folklore, and botany in terms of content, they are a source of reference for language researchers in terms of language performance. These texts, which are among the important sources of Turkic history of medicine and science, are examples that show that Turkic has been operated as a scientific language in almost every period of history. In addition, the mentioned texts give the opportunity to follow the course of Turkic language relations due to the foreign elements they contain.

According to the researches a lot of medical texts are well-known in Turkology, such as *Esrāru'l-e Ṭıbbā* (17<sup>th</sup>), *Ṭıb Kitābı* (17<sup>th</sup>-18<sup>th</sup>), *Ṭıb-nāme-i Türki*, *Ṭıbb-ı Yūsufî*, *Ṭabīblik Kitābı*, *Risāle-i Ṭıbb* (19<sup>th</sup>), *İhyā'ü't-Ṭıbb-ı Sübhānî Te'lîf-i Seyyid Sübhānkulı Bahādur hān*, *Menāfi'a'l-İnsān* (19<sup>th</sup>), *Risāle-i Şifā'ü'l-Ebdān* (1854), *Ḳabā'idü'l-İlāc*, *Ṭabībçılık* (20<sup>th</sup>), ect.

One of the full-fledged medical treatises written among the nomadic Turks at the beginning of the 16<sup>th</sup> century is “Dastûr al-'ilāj” (“Tradition/Methods of Treatment”, antique salon “Ampir” private fund 7.10 (152). BB. 1a-88b.) According to the manuscript versions, “Dastûr al-'ilāj” was written in 933 A.H., i.e. in 1526-1527, and the author of the work was Sultan Ali al-Khurāsānî,

known by the nickname “Tabib al-Khurāsānī” (“The Doctor of Khorasan”). We have very little information about the exact year of the author's birth, when and where he died, his activities, and his family name. Only Khoja Hasan Nisāri writes in his work “Muzakkir al-ahbāb” (“Remembrance of the Beloved”) that Sultan 'Ali al-Khurāsānī studied medicine from Maulana Hakim Shahrasiābzī. According to the information in the text of the work, he was the physician of the Sultan Abu Mansur Kushkinshi Khan (colloquially known as Kushim, 1432–1530) and his son Abu Sayyid Khan (1533), and wrote the work in Samarkand under the authority of Kushkinshi Khan and Abu Sayyid Khan. From the information in the text of the work, it is clear that he was the physician of the Sultan Abu Mansur Kushkinshi Khan (known as Kushim, 1432–1530) and his son Abu Sayyid Khan (1533), and the work was dedicated to the authority of Kushkinshi Khan and Abu Sayyid Khan in Samarkand. Having served as a doctor in the palace for more than twenty years, Sultan Ali al-Khurāsānī was suggested to write a book about the information he had collected from various books and their long-term healing experience by Kushkinshi Khan and his son. The author accepted the khan's offer and compiled this work in 1526–1527. These details are shown in the introduction of the work (Shadkam et al., 2021).

The medical treatise “Dastūr al-'ilāj” describes the use of plant, domestic animal organs and products in the Turkic healing tradition. It is impossible to fit all of them in one article, therefore, while mentioning the benefits of plants, we will limit ourselves to the use of some medicinal herbs in Turkic medical practice.

The treatise contains the names of the following medicinal herbs and fruits: *adırsman, aq piyaz, aq çamğur, almurt, anar, arfa, artuç uruğu, aşala uruğu, badreñ, bādyan, buyan, benefşe, çuhla, gül-e angebin, kabağ uruğu, kağun, kavun, kenza, kerefiş/ kerafş, kerğ, kızıl/aq şandal, küncüt, hizarisfand, hına, huğar uruğu, lale, labelab, maħmūde, noğut, safran, sarımsaq, sarığ helile, şekater, tarfa, terāngebin, tuba, 'unşul, üzüm, uravan, zeytün, zerdek, etc.*

One of the well-known herbs which is mentioned in the medical treatise “Dastūr al-'ilāj” (“Treatment Tradition”) is *adyrysman* (*adyraspan*). ***Adyrysman*** is a widely popular herb among the peoples of Central Asia. It is herbaceous plant with a woody underground root-stock belonging to the family of perennial plants, family Nitrariaceae, usually growing in saline soils in temperate desert and Mediterranean regions.

A common weed found in Persia, Central Asia, and the adjacent areas. Nowadays it is well-known in Iran and is widely distributed and used as a medicinal plant in Central Asia, North Africa and Middle East (Moloudizargari, 2013). It grows in Central Asia, the southern European part of Russia, the Caucasus, southern Europe, North Africa, the Middle East and Mongolia, and China (Encyclopedia, 2011).

This plant is translated from Arabic “harmal”, Lat. *Peganum harmala*; “wild rue” and known as “Espand” in Iran, “Harmel” in North Africa and “African rue,” “Mexican rue” or “Turkish rue” in the United States, “Adyraspan” in Kazakhstan. Also it is popularly known by the names “belobok”, “isryk”, “bibik”, “adiraspan”, “ispan”, “khazorispan”, “isirik”, “harmal” and many others.

The practice of burning *esfand* seeds to avert the evil eye is widely attested in early classical Persian literature. This practice may have been influenced by the association of *esfand* with *haoma* (q.v.), the sacred beverage of Zoroastrian lore. The continuity of Persian tradition has brought the ancient sacred plant into Islamic sources. A Shi’ite tradition states that there is an angel in each of the plant’s leaves and seeds. Its root drives away sorrow and magic, and the devil stays a distance of seventy houses away from homes in which it is kept (Omidasalar, 2012).

Branches, leaves and flowers of *adyraspan* are used for medicinal purposes. The famous scientist, doctor Abu Ali ibn Sina used it as a pain reliever when the sacrum is inflamed. Since ancient times, people have treated asthma by combining *adyraspan* seeds with flax seeds. It is also mixed with black or red pepper to treat psoriasis and is used as a diuretic and diaphoretic. *Adyraspan* is boiled with yarrow flowers, saffron, grass flowers and with their help hypoaoid gastritis is treated (www.sputnik.kz).

According to the treatise *adyrysman* gives a cure at Stomatology and some sickness like “sari su” (rpek. *kystis*):

– *adirisman uruđı badyan uruđı hamesini sođup un kılıp ađzına suyuda atale kılıp bar boynıđa afılsa külli belalarını yok kılır ve yine naşur yellerni tam urutur sarıđ su derdini revān kılır* (8a/9-8b/1-4);

– *herkim erse sedefni almurt uruđ adırısman uruđını oşup un kılıp tişige sürtse besiyar ađ bolğay ađzı hoşbuy bolğay* (16b/5-7);

– *eger bedbuylıđın tiş ađırsa adırısman uruđını ve şalfanı sođup tişniñ tübige salsa ađrıđı hoş bolur* (55a/1-3);

– *bir tutam ermen bir tutam adırısman bir tutam azđan monađı iki uđla zebe bir tutam muruni urumını alıyalıđ mıs azanda aynatıp uragulađ azanı oyup ađzıđa bir nimerse yapıp üstide olтурğuzup tirletmak kirek def bolur* (23b/1-6).

One of the herbs that we still do not fully understand the miracle of healing is **terangebin**. *Terangebin* (*Silybum marianum*, نبيجند، Ar. terencubin < Fars. Terengubin, Kazakh “Alatiken”, Turkish “deve dikenı”) is a species of thistle. It has various common names including milk thistle, blessed milkthistle, Marian thistle, Mary thistle, Saint Mary’s thistle, Mediterranean milk thistle, variegated thistle and Scotch thistle. In Turkish language is also popular as “Kudret helvası” (manna). This species is an annual or biennial plant of the family Asteraceae. This fairly typical thistle has red to purple flowers and shiny pale green

leaves with white veins. Originally a native of Southern Europe through to Asia, it is now found throughout the world. This herb is used for radiculitis, arthritis, convulsions, urinary retention, diseases of the liver, spleen, cholelithiasis, inflammation of the biliary tract, cholecystitis, hepatitis, colitis, hemorrhoids, allergic skin diseases, baldness, psoriasis, acne.

In the composition “Sıaft-i Matbuh-i Helile” by Şerafeddin Sabuncuğlu (1386–1470) *terangebin* is mentioned as “the sweet herb that falls on thistles at night” (Atici, 2003).

In the medical treatise “Dastûr al-'ilāj” (“Treatment Tradition”) *terangebin* is mentioned several times in recipes with camel’s organs like fat, urine, bile and etc.

– *Eger kimersenin yanı ağırsa quyan bolup tıña almasa tivenin miyesini terangebin birle hall kılıp yese quyan ağırı def bolur* (9a/7-9) – Translation: If a person has a headache and cannot walk, if he drinks camel’s fat mixed with milk thistle, he will be cured;

– *Eger kişini közi şab-kör bolsa tivenin zehresini terangebin birle hall kılıp içse közi rauşan bolğay, eger hıra bolsa hem def bolur* (9b/1-3) – Translation: If a person’s eyes are temporarily blind, if he drinks camel’s urine mixed with milk thistle, his eyes will be opened, if his eyes are blind, he will be healed;

– *Eger kişini boğazı ağırsa tivenin ötini terangebin birle hall kılıp yese şifa tapqay* (10a/1-2) – Translation: If a person has a sore throat, he will be cured if he eats camel bile mixed with milk thistle.

**Badyan** (lat. *Foeniculum vulgare*) is a herbaceous plant with umbellate flowers and a umbellate inflorescence, which belongs to the umbelliferae family. Essential oil is extracted from it. It is sometimes called fennel (black) (Musakulov, 1959). Like other medicinal herbs, it has various names such as “aramsarbas” in Kazakh, “fenhel” in Russian.

The history of this plant starts from the ancient Greeks and Romans who used it as medicine, food, and insect repellent. A fennel tea was believed to give courage to the warriors prior to battle. According to Greek mythology, Prometheus used a giant stalk of fennel to carry fire from Mount Olympus to Earth. Emperor Charlemagne required the cultivation of fennel on all imperial farms (Adams, Drost, 2022).

*Foeniculum vulgare* has been extensively used in traditional medicine for a wide range of ailments. Fennel is used in various traditional systems of medicine like in the Ayurveda, Unani, Siddha, in the Indian, and Iranian traditional systems of alternative and balancing medicine. It is used to treat simple ailments (e.g., cough/cold, cuts) to very complicated ailments (e.g., kidney ailments, cancer). It also has a wide range of veterinary uses. *F. vulgare* is used in many parts of the world for the treatment of a number of diseases, for example, abdominal pains, antiemetic, aperitif, arthritis, cancer, colic in children,



conjunctivitis, constipation, depurative, diarrhea, dieresis, emmenagogue, fever, flatulence, gastralgia, gastritis, insomnia, irritable colon, kidney ailments, laxative, leucorrhoea, liver pain, mouth ulcer, and stomachache (Badgujar et.al., 2014).

In local and traditional medicine fennel is chiefly used medicinally with purgatives to allay their side effects and for this purpose forms one of the ingredients of the well known compound liquorice powder. Fennel water has properties similar to those of anise and dill water: mixed with sodium bicarbonate and syrup, these waters constitute the domestic 'gripe water', used to correct flatulence of infants. Fennel tea, also employed as a carminative, is made by pouring boiling water on a teaspoonful of bruised fennel seeds. In the Indian Subcontinent, fennel seeds are eaten raw, sometimes with some sweetener to improve eyesight (Rather et al., 2016).

In the medical treatise "Dastûr al-'ilâj" badyan is mentioned several times:

– *adrisman uruđı badyan uruđı hamesini sokup un kılıp ađzına suyuda atale kılıp bar boynıđa afılsa külli belalarını yok* (8a/9-8b/1);

– *bir 'ilacı ol kim igirni olcađını arfa badyan suyu birle kaynatıp berse def' bolur* (58a/4-5);

– *ol kim penc badyan penc 'aselni erkek koynıđ göști birle üç ser badyannı kaynatıp şurbasını kırk kün içse şiş ađırıkı kèter* (59a/5-7);

– *sürki daruları bu turur yasmuđ iki mışkal iki mışkal olcađ iki mışkal yegir on biş mışkal piyaz üç mışkal sarıđ helile iki mışkal arfa badyan iki mışkal telhe uruđı iki mışkal hına uruđı iki mışkal kavun uruđı her kıysıdın iki yer mışkal cem' kılıp suđup şerbeti dinari kaynatıp terengebin birle fışık terreniđ suyu birle her kün üç mışkal içse kıarnıda yıđılđan suları yok bolur* (61a/7-9-61b/1-5).

## Conclusion

The treatise "Dastûr al-'ilâj" is one of the works that shows the rich and deep-rooted tradition of traditional medicine of the Turkic peoples. Author Sultan Ali Tabib wrote this work based on 20 years of experience and ancient medical works.

The fact that the manuscripts of this work were widely distributed indicates that the medicine contained in it was often used among the people, that the healing methods and medicinal herbs were widely used in it, and that the work itself was in great demand.

The works on such a medical topic, which had their own tradition, narrative language, and structure in the Middle Ages, are a data complex, a source of reference information, which provides several opportunities for researchers. These works allow conducting research not only in the history of medicine, in the field of ethnomedicine, but also in many fields such as sociology, ethnography, psychology, linguistics, folklore and botany, biology, pharmaceuticals.

Based on these findings, it is possible to say that folk remedies have been used for hundreds of years and that the effects of some of them are also known in today's medicine.

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